



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

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Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

4 2005

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Conyers:

This is in response to your letter to the Attorney General, expressing concern about the impact of the Department's Voting Access and Integrity Initiative on non-discriminatory access to the polls. Please excuse our delay in responding.

Ensuring full and fair access to the electoral process, and the integrity of the vote in federal elections, is a high priority of the Department of Justice. As you note in your letter, the Attorney General recently announced a Voting Access and Integrity Initiative highlighting this priority. In his announcement, the Attorney General repeatedly emphasized a two-prong attack designed to deter voter intimidation and discrimination, as well as election fraud and corruption. Included in the Initiative was emphasis on prosecuting violators vigorously whenever and wherever those offenses occur.

On October 8, 2002, a Voting Integrity Symposium was held at the Department of Justice for Assistant United States Attorneys who were appointed as the District Election Officers for their respective districts for the November election. Personnel from both the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division and the Election Crimes Branch of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section discussed civil rights and criminal laws applicable to elections to prepare the District Election Officers for their responsibilities on election day. The Civil Rights Division's presentation put emphasis on the types of voting rights issues to be on the alert for, including efforts to intimidate voters.

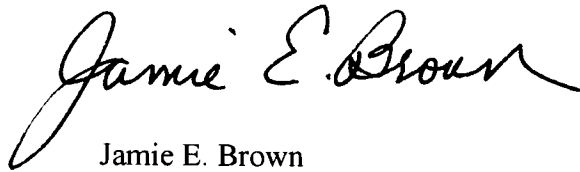
On November 5, 2002, the Department of Justice had in place a nationwide program using all available means to provide and guarantee access to the polls, prevent fraud and prohibit voter intimidation. Federal prosecutors and investigators were readily available to the public for the purpose of receiving complaints and taking any appropriate action when the polls opened. Every available resource of the Department of Justice – both in Washington, D.C. and in the states – was available to handle complaints, ensure access, open investigations and prosecute offenses. At the Attorney General's directive, District Election Officers were designated and were available in each U.S. Attorney district to receive and handle any complaints received from the public.

The Civil Rights Division sent observers and monitors to twenty-six jurisdictions in fourteen states to ensure compliance with voting rights laws. This was a formidable effort – the most comprehensive in many years – which included 324 federal observers from the Office of Personnel Management and 108 staff members from the Department of Justice, almost all from the Civil Rights Division. Those doing this monitoring coordinated their efforts with minority citizens in the communities, civil rights organizations doing similar monitoring, state and local election officials and United States Attorney's Office, as well as the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, to ensure full and appropriate monitoring of the election. The Civil Rights Division also worked closely with the Elections Crimes Branch and the Designated Election Officials so that any allegations of voting rights violations they received were referred to the Voting Section.

We are pleased to note that after the election few problems were reported to our observers or monitors, or to the Department directly.

Thank you for bringing your concerns about the Voting Access and Integrity Initiative to our attention. Please do not hesitate to contact the Department if we can be of assistance in other matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie E. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" being the most prominent.

Jamie E. Brown  
Acting Assistant Attorney General